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ABSTRACT

Drawing on data from a study of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this report analyzes the technical assistance that local districts receive in compensatory education, with an emphasis on the relationship between technical assistance and the local decision-making that ultimately shapes the program. The first section describes current patterns of technical assistance provided to districts by state Title I offices and assistance provided within districts to principals and staff. Also discussed is the districts' need to combine the two roles of authority and assistance, as do state Title I offices. The second section considers local decision-making processes that shape program implementation, concluding that there is a continuing need for accurate information on statutory requirements, both to improve compliance and to inform local managers of their options for determining key program features. Although divisions of authority vary considerably among districts, general patterns of centralization and decentralization in decision-making for different aspects of the program are described. A postscript addresses policy implications, including the apparent desirability of continuing the states' role in providing technical assistance and the need to recognize that assistance that builds local capacity is likely to be costly. (Author/MJL)

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND LOCAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN TITLE I ESEA

Brenda J. Turnbull

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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A SPECIAL REPORT
FROM THE
TITLE I DISTRICT PRACTICES STUDY

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND LOCAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN TITLE I, ESEA

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Submitted To The
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PREFACE

The Title I District Practices Study was conducted by Advanced Technology, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Education's Planning and Evaluation Service. One goal of this study was to describe how local districts operated projects funded by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] in the 1981-82 school year. A second, related goal was to document local educators' rationales for their program decisions, their perception of the problems and benefits of requirements contained in the 1978 Title I Amendments, and their assessments of the expected effects of Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act [ECIA] on school district operations of Title I projects. The study was designed specifically to draw cross-time comparisons with the findings of the Compensatory Education Study conducted by the National Institute of Education [NIE] and to provide baseline data for subsequent analyses of Chapter 1, ECIA's administration.

The results of the Title I District Practices Study are presented in this and eight other special reports (see back cover), plus the study's Summary Report. These reports synthesize data collected from a mail questionnaire sent to Title I Directors in more than 2,000 randomly selected school districts, structured interviews and document reviews in 100 nationally representative Title I districts, and indepth case studies in 40 specially selected Title I districts.

To meet the objectives of this major national study, a special study staff was assembled within Advanced Technology's Social Sciences Division. That staff, housed in the Division's Program Evaluation Operations Center, oversaw the study design, data collection and processing, analysis work, and report preparation. The study benefited from unusually experienced data collectors who, with Advanced Technology's senior staff and consultants, conducted the structured interviews and case studies. Two consultants, Brenda Turnbull of Policy Studies Associates and Joan Michie, assisted in major aspects of the study including the writing of special reports and chapters in the Summary Report. Michael Gaffney and Daniel Schember from the law firm of Gaffney, Anspach, Schember, Klimaski & Marks, P.C., applied their longstanding familiarity with Title I's legal and policy issues to each phase of the study.

The Government Project Officers for the study, Janice Anderson and Eugene Tucker, provided substantive guidance for the completion of the tasks resulting in these final reports. The suggestions of the study's Advisory Panel and critiques provided by individuals from the Title I program office, especially William Lobosco and Thomas Enderlein, are also reflected in these reports.

Members of Advanced Technology's analytic, management, and production staff who contributed to the completion of this and other reports are too numerous to list, as are the state and local officials who cooperated with this study. Without our

mentioning their names, they should know their contributions have been recognized and truly appreciated.

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Title I District Practices Study

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND LOCAL PROGRAM
IMPLEMENTATION IN TITLE I, ESEA

SUMMARY

At a time when the U.S. Secretary of Education has expressed the opinion that the Federal role in compensatory education should center on capacity building, a look at technical assistance and program implementation in this field seems appropriate. This report presents analyses of the technical assistance that local districts currently receive in compensatory education, with emphasis on the relationship between technical assistance and the local decison making that ultimately shapes the program. The report draws on data collected in a nationwide study of district practices under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA], a law that has been superseded by a substantially similar law, Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act [ECIA].

First, the technical assistance recently received by school districts is described. Two-thirds of local Title I Directors reported in this study that they received help from their state Title I offices over the past year (1980-81). The most common focal points for such assistance were the preparation of the district application and local program evaluation. It is noteworthy that the quality of the instructional program was not often the topic of assistance; just 24 percent of Directors said that their states had helped with this, and only a few others said that they would like such help. When asked about their

overall feelings about the help provided by the state, 75 percent of Directors gave a positive response. Other sources of help included the federally funded Technical Assistance Centers (which reportedly helped 29 percent of the Directors) and state offices other than the Title I office (13 percent).

The description of current technical assistance also deals with arrangements for help within districts. Most central Title I offices, especially in larger districts, provided assistance to program staff and Principals in school buildings through supervision of staff, visits from resource personnel, and in-service training. The report discusses the district's need to combine the two roles of authority and assistance, a combination that mirrors mixed roles found in state Title I offices.

The report's next major section deals with the local decision-making processes that shape program implementation. The analysis indicates that there is a continuing need for accurate information on statutory requirements, both to improve compliance with requirements and to inform local managers about the breadth of their options for determining key program features. Technical assistance dealing with program design must be directed to the appropriate decision makers if it is to be of help. Local programs are seldom governed by solitary decision makers but instead reflect compromises and divisions of authority among Title I Directors, higher echelons of district administration, Principals, classroom teachers, Title I teaching staff, and sometimes others. Although the divisions of authority vary

considerably among districts the following generalizations emerge:

- Title I Directors generally determine the grade levels, subjects, and staffing for local programs, but the opinions of Principals and teachers are weighed in these decisions.
- Title I Directors often select the attendance areas to be served, but Principals are sometimes able to influence the decisions concerning service to their buildings.
- Student selection might be highly centralized or highly decentralized, but teachers are likely to have more say in selection than Directors recognize.
- Many decisons about the instructional content are made at the school level, with classroom teachers playing a prominent role.

Firally, this report points to some policy implications of the findings. Briefly stated, these include the apparent desirability of continuing the states' role in providing technical assistance, since their current assistance is generally appreciated, and the need to recognize that assistance which builds local capacity is likely to be costly.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND LOCAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN TITLE I, ESEA

INTRODUCTION

Several recent trends in Federal education policy have created interest in the provision of technical assistance in categorical programs. As laws change and budgets become tighter, states and localities face new challenges in running compliant, high-quality programs. Meanwhile, the administration is seeking to lessen the amount of regulation in the intergovernmental system while improving educational leadership from the Federal and state levels. The U.S. Secretary of Education, T.H. Bell, has characterized the Federal role in compensatory education as one of "capacity building" (in press). These trends, if they continue, may alter the amount and nature of technical assistance provided under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act [ECIA],* the successor to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA].**

This report presents analyses that may help inform the provision of technical assistance under Chapter 1. It draws upon data from the Title I District Practices Study conducted by

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*Hereafter referred to as Chapter 1, or ECIA.

**Hereafter referred to as Title I.

Advanced Technology for the U.S. Department of Education [ED].* This study used three research strategies:

- A mail questionnaire sent to 2,000 randomly selected local Title I Directors
- Structured interviews and document reviews in 100 representative Title I districts
- Indepth studies in 40 specially selected Title I districts**

This report begins with a description of current technical assistance activities from the local perspective. This perspective includes local Title I Directors' comments on the nature and quality of the assistance they have received from state officials. This section of the report also looks at the assistance that takes place within school districts through such means as supervision, visits from resource personnel, and in-service training.

The next section of the report deals with the clients receiving assistance, namely, local school districts and schools. This discussion emphasizes, first, findings on the need for the continued provision of information on statutory requirements and guidelines. Second, this section addresses a fact that providers

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*Hereafter referred to as the District Practices Study or DPS. The study is limited to the Title I program for the educationally disadvantaged and does not address the separate Title I programs for migrant, handicapped, or neglected and delinquent children.

**The Summary Report of the District Practices Study presents the study methodology and the rationale for this data collection approach in greater detail.

technical assistance cannot ignore--the diversity of local decision-making structures in Title I. Local programs are seldom governed by solitary decision makers but instead reflect compromises and divisions of authority among Title I Directors, higher echelons of district administration, Principals, classroom teachers, Title I teaching staff, and sometimes others. Since technical assistance must be directed to the appropriate decision makers if it is to work, this report outlines patterns of decision making that occur in Title I programs.

Finally, the policy implications of these analyses are discussed briefly.

To set the stage for the analyses, this introduction reviews some current policy developments and recent research that point to the value of technical assistance. Chapter 1 is a shorter law than Title I, and the nonregulatory guidance and regulations accompanying this legislation less extensive than the regulations for Title I. A goal underlying these changes has been to increase state and local discretion in decisions about the program. The initial response has included a good deal of uncertainty and even anxiety. Local program managers wonder what will be expected by their state educational agencies [SEAs] and Federal auditors. Judging by the amount of time it has taken for previous changes in the Title I law to become familiar in the states and school districts, the new law seems likely to be known and understood only after a few years have elapsed. Technical assistance may be in high demand during those years.

Simultaneously, the strong likelihood of a diminished Chapter 1 budget creates an urgent need to improve the efficiency of program operations. Local decision makers will probably have to figure out how to reduce expenditures without damaging their educational programs. The effects of cuts in the Federal budget for Chapter 1 will be compounded in the many districts where state and local funds cannot keep up with inflation or have even shrunk due to tax limitation initiatives.

In addition to these current policy developments, there is a perennial reason to pay attention to technical assistance: laws, regulations, and funding do not automatically lead to good programs. Although the key ingredients of program implementation are found at the local level, research indicates that outside assistance can make a difference in implementation (see, for example, Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor, 1981). In one view, assistance that builds local capacity for program implementation represents an attractive alternative to the development and enforcement of detailed regulations (Elmore, 1980). This position rests on the argument that because central policymakers cannot anticipate and regulate every contingency, they would do better to spark and support local initiative to fulfill the spirit of a law.

However, the provision of assistance may also complement laws and regulations. Indeed, this seems to have been the case with Title I. Prior research on Title I suggests that technical

assistance in that program has been part of an "informal management system," characterized by Hill (1979) as follows:

> It operates through informal methods of persuasion, relying on the professional loyalties and pride of state and local administrators, and on the actions of local beneficiaries and supporters of federal programs, to generate decentralized pressure for faithful adherence to federal program objectives. (p. v.)

Hill goes on to observe that the informal management system in Title I--which includes technical assistance along with a professional network, the use of nonfiscal sanctions, private citizens who support the program, and evaluations of program effects--works to reinforce the formal system's rule making, oversight, and sanctions.

The close fit between the formal and informal management systems in Title I underscores the program's emphasis on compliance with the legal framework. Federal, state, and local officials in the Title I system have, of course, been concerned about program quality, but compliance with the law and regulations seems never to be far from their minds. Data from this study show that compliance has been a major focus of recent technical assistance. Moreover, information about requirements emerges as a continuing local need.

Matters of quality and compliance are generally thought to entail rather different processes of technical assistance. This issue is addressed in a paper by Firestone and Wilson (1981), who draw a similar dichotomy between "technical and political linkages." In "technical linkages," which are interactions

dealing primarily with curriculum and instruction, the clients of assistance are "identifying new practices or concepts, selecting ideas for local use, and developing the skills to put them into practice." "Political linkages," on the other hand, which are defined as dealing with knowledge about law and regulations, "are marked by a process of clarification and negotiation" as clients try to learn what central decisions have been made and "what opportunities and constraints these decisions create for local actors" (p. 4).* These researchers report that many agencies are able to provide both types of technical assistance, although individual providers of assistance often find it difficult to combine the two types.

Throughout this report, the dichotomy between quality and compliance as subjects for assistance will recur. We begin by looking at current assistance, which centers on compliance although with some attention to quality.

CURRENT PATTERNS OF ASSISTANCE

Assistance to Districts from States

By and large, district Directors of Title I programs get their technical assistance from state Title I offices, and in general they value this assistance. This section of the report

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*This report will continue to use the terms "quality" and "compliance" because the terminology of Firestone and Wilson may be confusing in the Title I context. Much of what is called "technical assistance" under Title I deals with requirements and thus would fall under these researchers' heading of "political" rather than "technical" help.

describes the kinds of assistance states provide, the ways in which it helps local districts, and Directors' assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of this assistance.

Two-thirds of district Title I Directors (68 percent) reported on the mail questionnaire that their state Title I offices helped them with some aspect of the local program over the past year. Other sources of assistance were apparently used less often. Technical Assistance Centers [TACs], which help states and districts with evaluation, were named as a source of help for 29 percent of districts*; state offices other than the Title I office reportedly helped 13 percent of districts; and Federal officials from regional offices or Washington gave direct help to 6 percent of districts.

These findings reflect the design of the intergovernmental system for administering Title I. The states are assigned major responsibility for program oversight and the provision of assistance, with backup help from the technical specialists in TACs. Federal officials do not personally attempt to contact thousands of participating school districts. Instead, they work with state officials to enhance their ability to oversee and assist local programs, and they sponsor TACs.

There were no statistically significant differences in the extent to which districts of different sizes obtained help from

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*This study did not explore the workings of the TACs because other research has recently addresed this topic (Reisner et al., 1982).

each of these sources. There was, however, a tendency for TACs to be used more by the larger districts: the reported rate of use of TACs rises from 23 percent in small districts (below 2,500 enrollment) to 37 percent in medium districts (between 2,500 and 10,000) and 35 percent in large districts (over 10,000).

The Directors who reported that they were not helped by the state Title I offices were likely either to go without assistance or to turn to sources outside the intergovernmental chain. Of this group of Directors, 49 percent said that no one helped them with their programs. Sixteen percent received help from other Title I Directors, and 15 percent were helped by administrators in their own districts or county offices. Fewer than 5 percent of these Directors reported help from other sources.

Types of Assistance Provided

The topics on which the state Title I offices provided assistance covered the full range of Title I activities, but some received more emphasis than others (Table 1). Most notably, assistance was centered on the "deliverables" that districts must submit to states--the application and the evaluation report. Forty-eight percent of Directors reported help with the application and 47 percent with evaluation. Substantial, though smaller, numbers of districts received assistance with one or more of the major components of district-level program administration: parent involvement, needs assessment, program management and budgeting, and student eligibility and selection of those in greatest need. Improving the quality of the

TABLE 1

TOPICS ON WHICH STATE TITLE I OFFICES PROVIDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, 1980-81*

TOPICS	PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS
Preparation of the district application	48%**
Evaluation	47%
Parent involvement	33%
Needs assessment	32%
Program management and budgeting	31%
Child eligibility and selection of those in greatest need	30%
Improving quality of instructional program	24%
Supplement-not-supplant	18%
Comparability	17%
School attendance area eligibility and targeting	16%
Coordination with other Federal and state education programs	14%

*Source: Mail questionnaire completed by local Title I Directors.

**Percentages in this column do not total to 100 percent since respondents could give more than one response to this question.

instructional program was the focus for a smaller number of districts, 24 percent. More technical aspects of the program received still less attention, although many districts were helped with each of them: supplement-not-supplant, comparability, and school attendance area eligibility and targeting. Finally, 14 percent of districts reported help in the coordination of Title I with other special programs. Serving students in nonpublic schools was not a focus of much help, apparently, since only 1 percent of Directors mentioned help on any topic not shown in Table 1.

These findings do not change much when broken down by district size. The only statistically significant differences that emerge are that small districts received less help with attendance area selection and comparability--topics that are irrelevant in the smallest districts.

State Title I offices apparently tended to help districts in ways that were closely related to keeping local programs in compliance with the law--or, at least, this was the kind of help that local Title I Directors remembered. Program quality for its own sake was seldom the major focus. To be sure, however, some topics lend themselves to a blend of quality-oriented and compliance-oriented assistance. This study indicates that assistance with quality was most likely to be found in combination with the topics of program management and budgeting, parent involvement, coordination with other programs, and evaluation.

Most of the program changes resulting from state technical assistance are considered to be of less than major importance. In interviews, the Directors who received help over the past year were asked whether the state's help had led to major program changes at any time over the past three years, and 35 percent said "yes." These Directors cited a variety of changes, which included expansion of the program to new grade levels, implementation of an excess-costs model, improvement of supplement-not-supplant compliance, initiation of in-service training, and so forth. No type of change emerged as predominant, though. Only two Directors cited each of the changes just listed. (As these examples illustrate, classifying the changes as compliance-oriented or quality-oriented is difficult. Most of them could have been either or both.)

States and school districts seem to share the initiative in technical assistance. Of the Directors who received help in the past year, 51 percent said that about equal amounts of the help were unsolicited and in response to requests, 35 percent said it was usually in response to requests, and 14 percent said it was usually unsolicited.

Many methods were used to provide assistance (Table 2). These included telephone conversations, workshops, manuals or newsletters, letters, and consultants assigned to school districts. The least frequently used method was that of visiting the districts, which was mentioned by 39 percent of the Directors who received help.

TABLE 2

METHODS USED IN STATES' PROVISION OF TITLE I TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, 1980-81*

METHODS	PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS REPORTING THAT HELP WAS PROVIDED IN THIS WAY (AMONG DISTRICTS THAT WERE HELPED)
Telephone calls	87%**
Workshops	76%
Printed materials (e.g., manuals, newsletters)	66%
Letters	65%
Consultants assigned to district	46%
Site visits	39%

*Source: Mail questionnaire completed by local Title I Directors.

**Percentages in this column do not total to 100 percent since respondents could give more than one response to this question.

Local Assessments of State Assistance

Local Title I Directors seem, in general, to be highly satisfied with their state Title I offices' efforts to assist them. All the Directors visited were asked an open-ended question about their "overall feelings" concerning the states' help with Title I. Seventy-five percent said this help was generally adequate, worthwhile, or helpful. Just 19 percent termed this help inadequate. Sixteen percent of respondents went on to observe that help was always available from the state, and an equal number commented on their good working relationship.

Probing on the issue of consistency or inconsistency of advice from the states, the interviewers uncovered a possible problem area. Eleven percent of the Directors criticized the state personnel for being inconsistent in their advice or information. In a similar vein, 9 percent of the Directors expressed the opinion that the state staff should have better training or qualifications.

Only 5 percent of the Directors mentioned that they would like more help from the state with the improvement of program quality. Since only 24 percent of districts received such help, this indicates a fairly low level of interest in quality-oriented assistance from the states. Title I Directors apparently turn to technical assistance when they want help with parts of their programs that must comply with the law. This is one reason for their concern with inconsistency from the state; they need

consistent signals to achieve the goal of compliance. They more rarely seek help with the quality of their programs.

Summing up, there is a general pattern of local satisfaction with the assistance that state Title I offices provide. About two-thirds of local Directors report that their states helped them over the past year, and the remaining Directors do not seem particularly unhappy with the lack of help. Apparently most of them either prefer to work independently or have found other sources of assistance that meet their needs, such as other Title I Directors or local administrators.

Assistance to Administrators and Instructors in Schools

To understand the current state of technical assistance in the Title I system, we must look within school districts as well as at the interactions of district staff with outsiders. Survey data from the DPS indicate that most districts do provide some type of assistance to their schools in Title I implementation. Since the people in schools do not generally have frequent contact with experts from outside the district, this within-district assistance is often a primary means of ensuring compliance and quality in Title I. For example, most in-service training is provided at the district or school level. Assistance from districts also takes several other forms, including actual supervision of the instructional staff, support for Principals on administrative matters, and involvement in decision making about instruction.

In-Service Training

A common way of assisting the teachers who implement a program is to provide them with in-service training. The most frequent source of in-service training for Title I instructors was the school district, which provided at least one in-service session for 80 percent of these instructors in 1980-81. School-level training was provided to 60 percent of instructors. Conferences and workshops were attended by 49 and 43 percent of instructors respectively. (The frequency of attendance at these different types of in-service training is shown in Table 3.)

In districts of all sizes, the district was the major source of in-service training. Size differences did emerge, however, in the frequency of both district-level and school-level training. As Table 4 indicates, instructors in the nation's largest districts were especially likely to receive in-service from both these local sources, while the instructors in small districts (under 2,500 enrollment) were especially likely to go outside the districts. Of the instructors in districts with enrollment above 10,000, 31 percent attended at least 8 district-level sessions, compared with 7 percent in the small and medium districts. Twenty-five percent of the instructors in the larger districts attended at least eight school-level sessions but just 4 percent of those in the small and medium districts did so.

In-service training is a valued source of professional help for many Title I teachers, but its popularity is exceeded by that of more informal discussions with colleagues. The instructors

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE I INSTRUCTORS BY FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE AT DIFFERENT TYPES OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING

NUMBER OF TIMES ATTENDED IN PAST YEAR (1980-81)	TYPE OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING			
	DISTRICT-LEVEL	SCHOOL-SITE	CONFERENCES	WORKSHOPS OUTSIDE DISTRICT
0	20%	40%	51%	57%
1	14%	8%	25%	16%
2	15%	13%	14%	12%
3	12%	6%	4%	6%
4	8%	9%	3%	3%
5	6%	5%	0%	2%
6	4%	3%	0%	2%
7	2%	1%	0%	0%
8 or more	20%	15%	2%	3%
TOTAL*	101%	100%	99%	101%

Source: Interviews with Title I instructors (N=282).

*Columns may not add to 100 percent due to rounding error.

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF TITLE I INSTRUCTORS ATTENDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING, BY SIZE OF DISTRICT*

DISTRICT SIZE	TYPE OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING: DISTRICT-LEVEL	SCHOOL-SITE	CONFERENCES	WORKSHOPS OUTSIDE DISTRICT
Small (<2,500)	55%*	32%	49%	52%
Medium (2,500, 10,000)	79%	57%	50%	52%
Large (>10,000)	72%	69%	31%	45%
Very Large (Among the nation's 60 largest)	92%	71%	49%	34%

SOURCE: Interviews with Title I instructors (N=273).

*Note: This is the percentage of instructors in small districts who attended at least one district-level in-service session in 1980-81. Thus, neither the columns nor the rows add to 100 percent.

were asked in interviews, "What programs or discussions with other people are the most helpful in giving you ideas for the Title I program?" About one-fourth of them (27 percent) said that in-service sessions were especially helpful sources of ideas. But a larger number, 36 percent, mentioned the value of informal discussions with other Title I teachers.

Since many instructors report that conversations with their colleagues are among the most helpful sources of ideas for the Title I program, in-service sessions may have indirect benefits. That is, by providing occasions for professional discussion among peers, they may foster exchanges of information even more valuable than the formal content of the in-service program.

Combining Authority and Assistance from the District Level

Looking at the interactions between district-level Title I personnel and the teachers and administrators in schools, we find a mix of supervision and help. Title I Directors and their central office staffs are often the formal supervisors of the Title I teachers in schools, and central office staff commonly act as monitors of compliance with Title I requirements. At the same time, central office staff act as problem solvers for the schools, helping out on mundane administrative chores or on substantive educational problems like the coordination of Title I instruction with the regular school program.

Nearly half of the schools visited in this study had arrangements for some central supervision of the Title I instructional staff. In 8 percent of schools, Principals told us that

the central district office, not they themselves, supervised Title I teachers and aides. Another 39 percent of the Principals reported that they shared the supervision with the central office. The central office most often played a supervisory role in the very largest districts (those among the nation's 60 largest). It had this role least often in the next-largest districts, with over 10,000 enrollment; these districts, in other words, gave the Principals the greatest degree of autonomy in Title I staff supervision (Table 5).

Central office Title I staff in most districts monitored the schools' compliance with requirements, particularly in the area of student selection. In one district in which student selection was a centrally controlled process, lists of the Title I students were kept at each school and at the Title I office. In that district and others, district staff regularly visited the schools to observe which students were being served. Several districts required the Title I instructional staff to keep logs indicating which students they worked with.

More than half the districts visited had staff members other than the Title I Director who were responsible for coordinating the Title I instructional programs. These people often had some teaching responsibilities, but their titles (such as Instructional Specialist, Title I Reading Coordinator, and so forth) indicated they were expected to provide direction and help for instruction.

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS WITH VARIOUS ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPERVISION OF TITLE I INSTRUCTORS, BY SIZE OF DISTRICT

WHO SUPERVISES TITLE I INSTRUCTIONS	DISTRICT SIZE			
	SMALL (<2,500)	MEDIUM (2,500-10,000)	LARGE (>10,000)	VERY LARGE (among the nation's 60 largest)
Principals alone	51%	51%	77%	46%
Central office alone	17%	8%	7%	6%
Joint supervision	32%	41%	16%	49%
	100%	100%	100%	101%*

Source: Interviews with Principals of Title I schools (N=282).

*Columns may not add to 100 percent due to rounding error.

A case study of a fairly large district illustrates the mixed responsibilities of the 5 Title I Coordinators who worked under the Title I Director to link the central office with the 15 Title I schools. These Coordinators, most of whom were former Title I teachers, had been in the school system for many years. As a liaison to Principals, they explained central office requirements and talked about how the school's Title I program was progressing. They spent about two-thirds of their time in the schools, monitoring and providing assistance. They were also involved in the planning and delivery of Title I in-service training, the acquisition of materials, and the preparation of the application.

In several of the larger districts visited, people in these coordinating positions supervised the instructional program, while Title I Directors spent most of their time on more technical aspects of the program (attendance area selection, for example) and on interactions with higher district management and state or Federal officials. Often, however, the Coordinators' role was simply to help the schools with program implementation; they had no formal supervisory responsibilities. In this capacity, they gained the gratitude of Principals and Title I instructors by carrying out many of the program's administrative functions such as gathering data and filling out forms.

Central staff assisted Principals with substantive educational matters, too. Thirty-six percent of the Principals surveyed said that someone from the central Title I office helped

them coordinate the Title I program with the regular instructional program. This was reported by 25 percent of the Principals in small districts, 43 percent in medium districts, 33 percent in large districts, and 36 percent in the very large districts.

To sum up, we found that most districts made some arrangements for assistance to be provided to the schools by the district Title I office. In-service training was generally part of this assistance. In almost half of the districts visited, formal supervision of Title I instructors was at least shared by the central office. Depending on the size and organizational complexity of the Title I office, arrangements might also include the presence of liaison staff who spent much of their time in schools.

District staff members often combined their supervisory authority over the local Title I program with efforts to help in program implementation. This combination of authority with assistance mirrored the dual role found in state Title I offices, where the people who would approve or reject district applications also helped in the preparation of these applicatons. The reporting and regulatory structure of Title I clearly provided opportunities for help to be offered and used, as Hill (1979) has observed, and this help could include a focus on program quality.

LOCAL DECISION MAKING: IMPLICATIONS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Local Title I programs differ tremendously from each other, not only in their program operations but also in why they operate the way they do. The process of program design and implementation may involve some or all of a whole range of actors, each with a distinctive agenda. State officials, local superintendents and their staffs, Title I Directors, district-level Title I staff, Principals, Title I instructors, classroom teachers, and parents--all may play parts in shaping local programs.

This fact has two important implications for would-be providers of technical assistance. First, providers of assistance can make a contribution by increasing the flow of accurate information through the intergovernmental system and within districts. They can clarify the requirements that apply to districts in a particular state. Within districts, simply identifying decision makers could be valuable--for example, where a Title I Director does not realize that a centrally designed program is being implemented differently from school to school according to the preferences of Principals and teachers.

Second, in order to work effectively with a school district on some feature of its program, assistance providers should first identify the key decision makers for that program feature. The Title I Director may or may not have authority over its implementation. Emrick and Peterson (1978) make this point in a summary of research relevant to assistance, where they remind assistance providers to attend to "systemic" as well as "personal" factors

that influence the acceptance of outside advice. They point out that assistance to school systems rarely goes to a single decision maker but rather enters a complex decision-making environment.

Knowledge of Requirements as a Focus for Assistance

The powerful influence of Federal and state requirements on local Title I programs suggests that providers of technical assistance should strive to increase local knowledge of these requirements. This is not to say that administrators in the intergovernmental system have failed to disseminate information about the law, regulations, and state rules. On the contrary, data from this study underscore how much state-to-local assistance already revolves around the requirements. Nevertheless, misconceptions about the rules were not uncommon among respondents in this study.

Increasing local understanding of requirements is important not only as a way of improving compliance in the program but also as a means of helping local decision makers to recognize and use the substantial amount of flexibility they possess in program decisions. This study turned up numerous examples of local programs implemented in ways contrary to the preferences of local educators simply because of the erroneous belief that some program feature was required. In these cases, good information could drive out the bad information that perpetuated unwanted practices.

The next few pages illustrate instances in which a state directive, information about a Federal requirement, or simply a vague worry about compliance was a key factor in local decisions. This happened often, as is shown by the answers to some general questions about program change.

The mail questionnaire revealed that, assuming level funding for their programs, 28 percent of local Title I Directors would like to change some program feature, such as the grade levels served, the subjects covered, the use of pullout or inclass designs, staffing, instructional technology, or curriculum. The most important factor preventing such changes was: "We are not sure whether the program would still be in compliance if the change(s) were made." This reason was "very important" to 40 percent of the Directors who wanted to make changes and "somewhat important" to another 12 percent. A related concern, that "the state Title I office would be opposed," was "very important" to 30 percent and "somewhat important" to 15 percent. Other reasons trailed well behind these two in importance.

The state Title I office sometimes influenced the procedures used for selecting attendance areas. One district served a junior high school despite a belief among local decision makers that services should be concentrated at the elementary level. According to the Title I Director, the state refused to allow the district to use grade-span grouping. Another district showed the potential long-term effects of a Federal intervention: ever since an audit exception in 1970 cited the district's failure to

concentrate its Title I resources sufficiently, the district had served only the highest-poverty schools, stopping well short of serving all the eligible schools.

In the area of student selection, many states specified a test to be used and a percentile cut-off score for student eligibility. State Title I offices seemed to exert an influence on restricting services to a smaller group of students than would otherwise be served. On visits to the districts, state monitors often checked to see whether the students served were those selected for the program. Several districts reported that state requirements led them to reduce the student/staff ratio (in each class period or for each teacher's total student load). This was generally mentioned as a problem; local decision makers would have preferred to serve more students but were restrained by the state.

The influence of states and the Federal Government was evident in local decisions on the use of pullout or inclass instructional designs, although educational rationales were said to be dominant in these decisions.* Of the 92 percent of Directors who used pullout designs for at least part of their programs, 60 percent said the fact that "a pullout design can make it easier to demonstrate compliance with funds allocation requirements" was

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*See Michael Gaffney and Daniel Schember, "The Effects of the Title I Supplement-not-Supplant and Excess Costs Provisions of Program Design Decisions," special report in this series.

an important reason for this choice. Forty-six percent cited as important the fact that the state Title I office advised the use of this design. Outside influences did not seem to loom so large in the decision to use an inclass design. Of the Directors using this design, 30 percent called the state's advice important in the decision.

Few examples were found of state Title I offices influencing the choice of curriculum. In one case, though, the state urged a district to adopt a new approach that would enable it to serve the same number of students with reduced dollars. The district therefore found and introduced a program disseminated through the National Diffusion Network. The program was initially installed in five schools whose teachers and Principals were viewed as receptive to the new ideas.

The foregoing examples indicate that some technical assistance from state Title I offices has consisted of spelling out what districts are expected to do in their Title I programs. Implicit in these stories is another message as well--that districts need information about the extent of their flexibility in decision making. This study yielded several examples of options that the Title I law made available to districts but that many Title I Directors did not know about, despite the extensive dissemination efforts of Federal and state governments.

For example, many Title I Directors reported that for the 1981-82 school year they were unaware of several provisions that increased districts' flexibility in the selection of attendance

areas. Thirty-eight percent did not know that attendance areas could be ranked and selected on the basis of low achievement rather than poverty. The option of using data on poverty in a school's actual enrollment, rather than in its attendance area, was unfamiliar to 26 percent. Twenty percent of Directors did not know they could serve attendance areas in which the rate of poverty fell below the district average (as long as the rate of poverty in those areas exceeded 25 percent). The option of skipping schools in which other compensatory programs provided services of the same nature and scope as Title I was unfamiliar to 7 percent of Directors--a group that represented about one-third of the 23 percent of districts having state or local compensatory programs.

Similarly, many Directors were unaware of a provision added to the law in 1978 to permit occasional services to students who are not educationally deprived. Thirty percent of Directors did not know that such students could be served "on an incidental basis."

Implications for Assistance

From these findings on the influence of requirements and on local unfamiliarity with some requirements, three lessons stand out for providers of technical assistance:

- In order to comply with the law, school districts need accurate information on what is required and what is forbidden.
- Districts also need information on what is not covered by any requirements and where they therefore have some discretionary authority. This will become especially important with the transition to Chapter 1.

- State Title I offices, in providing information about their own requirements, must combine and balance two divergent roles--that of regulator and that of helper.

Centralization and Decentralization within Districts

Local Title I programs are not monolithic. Title I Directors and other central office staff make some decisions about program implementation, while Principals and teachers make other decisions. A provider of technical assistance therefore does not work with a district per se but rather with a collection of people in different organizational positions who exercise varying kinds of discretion over program implementation. To make the situation even more complicated, this study indicates that there is no way of knowing in advance who typically makes particular kinds of decisions in a given district. Some patterns are more likely than others: Title I Directors generally determine the selection of attendance areas; classroom teachers in a majority of districts exercise an influence on the Title I instructional program. Still, each district displays its own mixture of authority relationships, consensus building, and decentralized discretion. Two examples can illustrate the diverse situations that a provider of technical assistance can find in districts.

In one district the Title I program was a highly centralized operation. Principals, Title I teaching staff, and classroom teachers seemed comfortable with the fact that they had little discretion in matters such as student selection procedures. An important reason for their acquiescence in this centralized program was apparently that the central Title I staff

called themselves--and functioned as--a resource center. This center had the expertise and time to recruit Title I teachers and aides, find materials and approaches for low-achieving students, help in testing and the analysis of test results, make politically and educationally difficult decisions about the grades and students to be served with limited Title I resources, and complete applications and reports.

Principals interviewed in this district gave the Title I staff high marks for fulfilling all these functions. Confident that the program could run smoothly under central direction, the Principals were apparently happy to take a very limited role in its operations.

In another district, the instructional program varied substantially from school to school. Principals and classroom teachers took the dominant roles in determining what program resources students would receive. The district office suggested various program models and monitored school practices to ensure that the practices chosen were in compliance with the law, but this office did little to encroach on building autonomy. Principals decided how to deploy Title I aides within the school and often decided what materials to purchase with Title I dollars. Student selection and the topics to be covered in Title I instruction were generally decided in discussions among the classroom teachers, reading resource teachers, and Title I aides--discussions in which the classroom teachers tended to have the final say. Thus, the Title I program in this district looked

different not only from school to school but from classroom to classroom.

If either of these districts needed help, assistance providers would have to tailor their approach to the local program structure. In the first district, technical assistance from outside the district would be a resource orchestrated by the resource center and would probably be diffused in an orderly fashion along with the other help already offered by district staff. In the second district, outside assistance would probably be most effective if it were delivered directly in the schools (as long as the district Title I office approved this arrangement). Principals would be a much less important target of assistance in the first district than the second.

Different approaches to assistance might also be warranted for any one district, depending on which program feature needed attention. Every district studied had some centrally determined program features and other features that could be determined at the building level. Even an extensively decentralized program had elements that were decided centrally, such as a form to use in student selection, or a fixed staff-pupil ratio. Even in a highly centralized program that was studied, where the district specified the instructional content to be covered each day in the Title I classes, Principals were able to choose between inclass and pullout arrangements. Someone who wanted to help any of these districts with compliance or quality in the implementation of the Title I program would therefore have to start by learning

what decisions are made where. Summarized below are this study's findings on the different ways of making decisions on several features of the Title I program.

School Staff Influence on District Decisions

Title I Directors do not generally run their programs autocratically. The views of teachers and Principals are important in reaching several kinds of districtwide decisions. This was a finding from the study's questions on changes in grade-level emphasis, subject matter, staffing, or curriculum in local programs. In each of these areas, "changes in Title I funding level" ranked first as a reason for making a program change. "Teachers' or Principals' recommendations" ranked either second or third, however, with "data from formal need surveys" ranking just below or above this category in importance.

Even in the selection of attendance areas, where the case studies indicate that Title I Directors generally made the final determination, Principals had ways of exercising influence. In a district where the poverty measure was a count of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches, for example, some Principals actively recruited students into the lunch program. One sent a letter home to parents, explaining that they could support their school by signing up for the lunch program--even if their children attended the morning kindergarten and therefore went home before lunchtime.

In another district, a Principal seemed to have chosen to have her school excluded from Title I after a year in which she

believed it was not helping her participating students. When the school slipped out of eligibility she exerted no pressure for it to stay in the program under the "grandfathering" option--although others in the district commented that she probably could have remained in the program if she had done so.

Decentralized Decision Making

Many aspects of local Title I programs are determined at the school level. Although this point seems obvious to anyone who has recently spent time in schools, it can be overlooked in planning technical assistance. Those who want to assist local programs must recognize that the "local" level comprises both districts and schools, that these entities are sometimes at odds with each other, and that they always share the authority for program implementation.

Sometimes local decentralization is associated with problems of noncompliance, as this study found in one district in which the central Title I office had little authority over the schools. In one school in this district, Title I services replaced district-funded reading activities. In another, aides worked regularly with non-Title I students in the classroom and substituted for classroom teachers who were absent. Principals and Title I teachers in these schools admitted they were not fully complying with the law, but they had decided to continue in these practices until they were specifically compelled to change. Only when monitors from the state visited this district and observed instances of noncompliance did the district office crack down on

the violations. (This monitoring visit could, in fact, be viewed as an instance of technical assistance to the district.)

This example should not be interpreted to mean that every decentralized program is likely to be noncompliant. Another district had a decentralized program because of a strong conviction that a higher-quality program would result from allowing school building staff to make their own decisions. "Ownership" of the program was an important concept in this district. Central office staff held an in-service session for Principals in which they presented three instructional approaches for the Title I reading program. It was up to the Principals to choose an approach, work with their staff, foster coordination with the classroom program, and check to see that the curriculum was being followed.

Examples of decentralization turn up in many areas of Title I practice. The area of student selection probably presents the greatest contrast between centralized and decentralized decision making in Title I programs. Some districts in this study tightly controlled this process, while others permitted variation at the school-building level. Still other districts claimed the process was standardized when, in fact, the schools were exercising discretion.

Teacher judgment entered the process of student selection in most districts. Indeed, while about 85 percent of Title I Directors said that teacher judgment could be used to admit or reject students for Title I, teachers in 91 percent of districts said

that it did. It seems reasonable to believe that the teachers' assessments were closer to the truth, since they were presumably thinking of instances in which they or their colleagues had determined a student's selection for Title I.

Probably the greatest decentralization of decision making was observed in the area of instructional program design. This fits the philosophy of Title I displayed in the law, regulations, and most administrative behavior--that the educators most directly involved with a program are in the best position to determine its design, while matters such as targeting and fiscal controls are more appropriate subjects for regulation and control from above.

The choice between pullout and inclass services seems to devolve to school buildings fairly often, according to the findings of the case studies. In fact, this decision was sometimes made at the individual classroom level, based on the preferences of the Title I teacher or aide and/or the classroom teacher. In two of the case study districts, Title I Directors overestimated the extent to which schools were using inclass services. In two other districts the Directors said schools were using pullout more than they, the Directors, would like to see.

Curriculum decisions were generally shared between the district and building levels. Title I instructors reported they had widely varying degrees of autonomy in deciding what they would teach and that a diverse cast of characters might be involved in making these decisions. Although the classroom teacher ranked

first as an influence on what the Title I instructor taught, this influence was apparently somewhat limited. Classroom teachers seemed to keep Title I instructors posted on what skills were being covered in the regular classroom, and for 55 percent of the instructors this information had an influence on the Title I program. However, only 20 percent of the classroom teachers surveyed reported they had an influence on what materials were used in Title I.

Title I instructors' reports about who influenced their programs were analyzed to yield a picture of the relative prevalence of school influence, district influence, and the combination of the two. A total of 60 percent of instructors said that someone in the school building--the classroom teacher, the Principal, or a resource teacher--substantially influenced what they would teach. Thirty-three percent of instructors said that someone at the district level--the Title I Director or Coordinator, or a district supervisor--had such an influence. The combinations are shown in Table 6. This table reveals that the most common pattern was for Title I instructors to shape their programs based on suggestions from within the school. A substantial number were influenced by neither the district nor the school but instead developed their programs independently or looked elsewhere for advice (the most frequent outside source of guidance being parents). The next largest category was that of Title I instructors who relied on both the school and the district for suggestions. Finally, a few instructors were influenced only by the district.

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF INSTRUCTORS REPORTING PARTICULAR SOURCE OF INFLUENCE ON INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

		DISTRICT*		
		HAS INFLUENCE	DOES NOT HAVE INFLUENCE	TOTALS
School**	Has influence	22%	38%	60%
	Does not have influence	11%	29%	40%
	TOTALS	33%	67%	100%

Source: Interviews with Title I instructors (N=275).

*Includes Title I Director, Title I Coordinator, or district curriculum supervisor.

**Includes classroom teacher, Principal, or resource teacher.

Decentralization, then, seems to be the typical pattern for the instructional program.

Implications for Assistance

All in all, these findings on local decision making indicate that there is no simple prescription for technical assistance with program implementation. The key decision makers are rarely found exclusively at either the district level or the school level, and the local balance of authority is likely to be different for each aspect of the program. This means that providers of assistance who want to take a "systemic" perspective should attend to the following rather complicated principles:

- If a district is to receive intensive assistance, it should be carefully analyzed to identify the decision makers. Whatever pattern of decison making is observed in a particular district, assistance should be directed to the decision makers.

- Although generalizations in this area are risky, this study's findings indicate that the following patterns are frequent:

  - Title I Directors determine the grade levels, subjects, and staffing for local programs--but the opinions of Principals and teachers are weighed in these decisions.

  - Title I Directors select the attendance areas to be served, but Principals are sometimes able to influence the decisions concerning service to their buildings.

  - Student selection may be highly centralized or highly decentralized, but teachers are likely to have more say in selection than Title I Directors recognize.

  - Many program design decisions are made at the building level. This is sometimes true of the decision to use a pullout or inclass design, and it is almost always true of curriculum. However, the

central office has a "substantial" role in the curriculum decisions of one-third of Title I teachers.

- When the goal is to improve local compliance with the law, providers of assistance should attend to the possibility that schools are ignoring district mandates.

- When the goal is to improve program quality, providers of assistance may want to capitalize on the sense of program ownership found in school buildings. Particularly in matters of program content, Principals and classroom teachers are important decision makers who can presumably help to improve the program when they feel that they have a stake in it.

POSTSCRIPT ON POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has, in general, been intended to be helpful to those who provide assistance under Chapter 1. Data from the DPS have been used to indicate the locally perceived strengths and weaknesses of current assistance (from both outside and inside school districts), the patterns of local decision making that shape local receptivity to particular kinds of assistance, and some needs and resources for assistance observed during the current school year.

For a policy audience, these data do not imply that any particular arrangements for supporting and conducting technical assistance would be superior to any others. To be sure, the high marks that local Title I Directors award to technical assistance from their SEAs suggest that these agencies would be well received as the primary source of assistance. The cut in administrative funding that these agencies will sustain under Chapter 1, however, may impair their future effectiveness in assistance.

It is simply too early to tell how this change will affect the perceived availability and usefulness of help from states. More broadly, policy decisions about the provision of technical assistance will depend on overall budget priorities within Chapter 1 and for this program in relation to others.

The availability of funds will obviously have a determining influence on the amount and nature of technical assistance to be provided under Chapter 1. This report has highlighted the complexity of providing help with the design and implementation of local programs, given the multiple decision makers who may be involved. This complexity translates more or less directly into cost. In order to help a district with any of the details of its program, an assistance provider would typically have to spend some time diagnosing (or, at best, helping the client diagnose) local decision-making patterns.

Other research, too, has indicated that technical assistance does not come cheaply. A recent study of TACs for Title I evaluation estimates the cost of their services at an average of "$2,400 for a field visit, $480 per-hour for instruction, $170 per-client served, and $44 per-client consultation or training hour" (Reisner et al., 1982, p. 36). In summary, then, if the Federal Government is to support capacity building as the cornerstone of its efforts in compensatory education, policymakers should recognize the expense associated with this decision.

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